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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: MP HOSTS MEETING TO URGE FEMALE  
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND CHANGES TO PERSONAL STATUS LAW

REF: A. 05 KUWAIT 5190

[1](#)B. 05 KUWAIT 2064

[1](#)1. MP Ali Al-Rashed (aka Abu Faysal), the head of the Human Rights Committee in the National Assembly, hosted approximately 40 women at his diwaniya on February 20 to encourage them to take advantage of their newly won voting rights (ref B) and to discuss personal status issues. The featured speaker was Dr. Nuri Al-Khorafi, a women's rights advocate and former university professor, who discussed areas of personal status law that need to be changed or better enforced in order to protect the rights of women:

-- Kuwaiti men do not have to inform their first wives when they are taking on second wives. This often leads to disputes that end in one of the two women (more often the second) getting divorced.

-- Article 111 of the Personal Status Law allows women to divorce their husbands (khula'), but it also stipulates that she has to pay compensation to the husband. Since there are no stipulations about how much this compensation should be, men often extort exorbitant sums from their wives' families.

-- Article 163 of the Personal Status Law states that husbands who divorce their wives have to pay alimony for 15 months, but this law is not enforced in practice.

-- Current law requires that a woman get her father's approval to marry, even if he is a deadbeat dad. Furthermore, the law does not require the woman to be informed that she is being married. MP al-Rashid gave an example from his legal career where an 18-year-old girl wanted to get married and discovered that she had been married (and divorced) seven times. Her father had been splitting with the husbands the "land and loan" privileges that come with marriage. (Note: generous housing loans and other benefits are given to the male head of household upon marriage. End note.)

-- A participant from the crowd, Shi'a lawyer Najla Al-Naqi, noted that fathers have the right to determine where their children go to school, even if they do not support them or participate in raising them.

[1](#)2. Al-Khorafi noted that the Ministry of Justice has a lawyer on call for free consultations. The Ministry also has a team of women who, for 5 Kuwaiti Dinars (about \$17), will complete the legal paperwork for women to file personal status cases.

[1](#)3. Al-Rashid ended the evening with an impassioned speech urging women to take advantage of their recently enhanced political rights. He urged them not to be satisfied if candidates simply come and pay them visits. Women should make specific demands and use the political process to elect advocates for women's rights. Al-Rashed is also organizing a

March conference on women's issues and human rights (ref A).

Bio Note

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¶4. Dr. Nuri Al-Khorafi is the sister of the speaker of the National Assembly. She has a Ph.D. in Psychology from George Washington University. She has taught at Kuwait University, and has worked at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs as well as the Ministry of Justice. She currently works at a private legal office called Women and Personal Status Law.

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